



Central University of
Technology, Free State

■ VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL



Vice-Chancellor's Communiqué

Outcome of the disciplinary hearing for students who disrupted registrations and classes in January/February 2014

You will remember a number of communiqués at the beginning of this year in this respect.

The Students Disciplinary Committee, led by Chris Motaung, conducted a hearing. I must hasten to thank him and his colleagues, Zethu Mazibuko and Tumi Morolong, for being so bold as to agree to chair a hearing of this nature in the first place. Given the intimidation and violence that had already been perpetrated, having to conduct such a hearing would instil fear amongst many.

We invited you to share whatever information and evidence you had. Let me thank all of those staff and students who did. Know that by doing so, you made yourself soldiers against violence in our country.

The outcome of this hearing is that the 12 students who had been identified and charged will be expelled from the university with effect from 21 July 2014 when the next semester commences. However, in accordance with the relevant Disciplinary Rules, the 12 students have the right of appeal of this outcome.

As you are all aware on 31 January and on 3 February, there was an attempted hijacking of the university by a marauding group of students. They sought to hold all of us and the university processes to ransom and in the process they terrorised and traumatised so many of us and put the future of so many potential students in peril.

We may not have counted the casualties of this act in terms of prospective students who may have simply run away, never to return to register at CUT, which may have been their only opportunity to earn university qualifications. We may not have counted how many members of the public, potential supporters and funders of CUT may have developed a negative disposition towards us. We may not have counted how many of our staff and students were manhandled and remain traumatised to this day.

I must again thank all those students and staff members who stood their ground against such selfish, inconsiderate and actually violent behaviour from highly educated young people who should be leading by example in our society.

This year, we celebrate 20 years of democracy and the rule of law. Yet, so many unlawful acts are committed publicly, seemingly without the perpetrators ever flinching. We see people in the Northwest province's platinum mining belt being mowed down by those who have abrogated to themselves the right to choose for them whether they will go to work or not. It's open season for them. We see people carrying dangerous and unlawful weapons during protests. It's open season for them. We hear on radio, watch TV and read newspapers where unequivocal threats and statements about planned violent behaviour are made. It's open season for them.

In this manner, violence in South Africa has become an integral part of our life. But, it should not be. There is a 'law of nature' I heard about called '*the law of diminishing astonishment*'. This law seems to be much at play amongst South Africans. We tolerate violent behaviour and use history and social circumstances to justify it, even though it is inimical to our constitutional democracy and our rule of law. Because it happens so many times and everywhere each time it happens we have become less and less astonished. We have become numb to it and we have made it part of our way of life. But, we could begin a new era, right here.

It's time we all wake up and deal with violent behaviour decisively, wherever it rears its ugly head. CUT may just be one small, and to some, insignificant institution. But, if all of our institutions, organisations, organs of democracy and fellow individual South Africans resolved to tackle this scourge head on, South Africa would be one of the most peaceful and prosperous countries in the world.

Here at CUT, I have seen soldiers against violence: in those who initiated this difficult process in Protection Services, the Registrar's Office and elsewhere; those volunteered information and evidence and those who conducted the hearing without fear. You have started a small revolution against violence in this country. To those who shied away and recoiled in fear: shame on you!

What the conduct of the hearing demonstrates is that it is not just the Vice-Chancellor and the Management that run this university. But, it is the university system that runs this university. Management and all staff merely ensure that systems are not compromised and run efficiently and effectively. When organisational systems run well, you might not even need a Vice-Chancellor!

Thandwa Mthembu

Vice-Chancellor and Principal

29 May 2014